



Bill would require better training for property assessors

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Construction workers put the finishing touches on newly built single family homes in San Diego, California March 25, 2013.
REUTERS/Mike Blak

MADISON, Wis (WSAU-Wheeler News) Local property assessors who don't meet uniform standards could be punished by the state under a new bill considered for next year. Assembly Republican Samantha Kerkman of Salem is working on a bill to let the Revenue Department suspend an assessor's state certification for up to a year. That's after the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel found that assessments in some Wisconsin areas are so out of whack that up to 20-percent of total property taxes are being paid by the wrong people.

Right now, the state can only revoke certifications for misconduct, negligence, or incompetence -- and no assessor has been revoked for at least the last decade.

State law requires properties to be assessed uniformly for tax purposes. Kerkman's bill would limit the number of years a community's assessment roll can be out of compliance from seven years to six, before the state can order a supervised re-valuation. Municipalities are considered to be out of compliance when a major class of property -- like homes or businesses -- are assessed 10-percent higher or lower than their total market values. Assessors say the ideal situation is to re-assess communities each year -- but that's expensive, and many cash-strapped local governments have hesitated to do it.

Kerkman, who's unopposed in Tuesday's election, said she tried pressing the issue almost a year ago but it never went anywhere.